

# Outreach Assistance Handbook

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

**Missouri**

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The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service instituted a National Outreach Policy, [230 GM Part 406](#), in 2003. This policy provides guidance to agency staff to meet outreach requirements and accountability standards.

Missouri Field Offices are to include outreach as a component of the Field Office Business Plans.

### ***Step 1 – Identify under-served and non-traditional customers in each county in Missouri.***

District Conservationists and RC&D Coordinators are responsible for identifying these individuals and/or groups in their service areas. Here are some resources to help:

1. Ag Census Statistics  
<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/census02/volume1/mo/index2.htm>
2. Employee and Partner knowledge
3. Minority organizations
4. County Government (Public Health, Social Services, Recorder, Assessor)
5. Chambers of Commerce
6. Community non-profit organizations
7. Local media

## ***Step 2 – Get to know your Potential Customer Groups and their Needs***

Once you have identified the groups in your county, gather some information about them to better understand their needs and the best communication methods for them. Your outreach efforts will be more successful if you know your audience.

### **What you need to know:**

- Characteristics (social, economic, cultural), attitudes and perspectives
- Connections to land and agriculture
- Natural resource or other needs, and problems as they see it
- Current efforts in the community to address their natural resource needs
- What is limiting their participation? (e.g.: Lack of information/knowledge, lack of financial or technical resources, communication barriers, lack of trust in government)
- Why should they participate? What are the benefits to them?

### **How do you gather the information?**

#### **Resources:**

- Staff knowledge
- Partner knowledge
- Local agencies and organizations that serve the underserved groups
- Local newspapers or other media that serve the underserved groups
- Field office records of assistance and participation
- FSA and other government agency records
- Census data
- University or Extension Service research and reports

## ***Understanding Under-Served Customers***

Understanding customers and potential customers by considering the characteristics, problems, and needs they have in common can be helpful in outreach efforts and success. The following chart provides some information to consider.

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Considerations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Education</li><li>• Occupational status</li><li>• Intergenerational land transfer</li><li>• Risk orientation</li><li>• Number of innovations adopted</li><li>• Use of local media for conservation information</li><li>• Conservation planning</li><li>• Local organization participation</li><li>• Awareness of resource problems</li><li>• Farm size</li><li>• Ownership/rental</li><li>• Lease arrangements</li><li>• Gross farm sales</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• College education or not</li><li>• Full-time or part-time farmer, off-farm job</li><li>• Children to take over farm or not</li><li>• Risk taker or not</li><li>• Average, above, or below</li><li>• What sources are used – local, ethnic etc.</li><li>• Follows a conservation plan or not</li><li>• Active or not</li><li>• Average, above or below</li><li>• County average, above or below</li><li>• Percent of rented and/or owned land</li><li>• 1 year, 2 year, stable or not</li><li>• County average, above or below</li></ul>

### ***Step 3 – Develop an Outreach Component to Include in your Field Office Business Plan for the year.***

- Set a goal
- Identify the target audience
- List the barriers and benefits to them
- Write 2-3 short messages to communicate
- Identify how and when you will communicate (meetings, direct mail, media, posters, newsletters, etc)
- Evaluate and report your success.

#### **Be creative! Action items can include, but are not limited to:**

- Hold demonstrations and tours with members of underserved groups
- Conduct meetings, training sessions, and presentations
- Identify and contact key leaders in the community
- Develop brochures to meet specific needs
- Use direct mail
- Develop and distribute surveys
- Develop advisory or mentoring networks
- Develop partnerships with non-traditional groups and organizations
- Market the agency better and to non-traditional groups
- Issue news releases, use media used by underserved groups
- Become involved in cultural groups
- Display posters and signs where underserved groups tend to gather
- ***PERSONAL CONTACTS*** are often the best, most effective communication
- Provide church bulletin inserts
- Maintain information at local libraries, parks

## ***Step 4 – Identify and Request Any Resources for Outreach Implementation***

- Work with your supervisor
- Contact the Public Affairs staff for assistance
- Work in cooperation with your partners
- Enlist a volunteer for help
- Utilize local or community organizations

Remember to use volunteers, local organizations, and other partners to help you. Some items are accomplished better and more effectively by non-agency individuals that have more expertise, credibility or contacts with particular groups.

What funds are needed and available? What technical expertise is needed and available?

Consider all sources for financial and technical support: USDA, state, county, local and private funding and technical possibilities.

## ***Step 5 –Carry out your plan! Evaluate and report your progress and success stories.***